



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8**

1595 Wynkoop Street
DENVER, CO 80202-1129
Phone 800-227-8917
<http://www.epa.gov/region08>

Ref: 8EPR-N

Cornell Christensen
Bureau of Land Management
Richfield Field Office
150 East, 900 North
Richfield, Utah 84701

RE: Final RMP/EIS for the Richfield Field Office
Planning Area, CEQ#: 20080301

Dear Mr. Christensen:

Consistent with our responsibilities and authorities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the Region 8 Office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Final Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Richfield Field Office Planning Area (RFOPA) and response to EPA's comments submitted for the Draft EIS. The BLM manages approximately 2.1 million acres of public lands, and an additional 1.5 million and 95,000 acres of mineral resources underlying national forests and private/state lands respectively within this Field Office. These lands and resources are located within the following six counties in Utah: Sanpete, Sevier, Piute, Wayne, Garfield, and Kane.

This RMP will revise and replace six existing land use plans. When completed, the RMP revision will provide long-term management direction to BLM on planning issues, including: recreation and travel (including OHV use), minerals and energy resources, special designations, non-Wilderness Study Area (WSA) lands with wilderness characteristics, and visual resources. The Final RPM/EIS considers five alternatives. Alternative N, No Action, would continue the existing management program. Alternative A emphasizes commodity production, mineral extraction, and motorized recreation. Alternative B, BLM's Preferred Alternative, attempts to balance protection and conservation of physical, biological, and cultural resources while providing for commodity production and mineral extraction. Alternative C emphasizes conservation of physical, biological, and cultural resources over commodity production, mineral extraction, and motorized recreation. Alternative D is equivalent to Alternative C except that it includes management of non-WSA lands to maintain their wilderness characteristics.

Based on our review, BLM has sufficiently responded to some of EPA's comments submitted for the DEIS, and has modified the FEIS accordingly. EPA's remaining concerns on several issues that require further clarification are in the enclosure to this letter. EPA requests

that BLM address these remaining concerns at the time the approved RMP and Record of Decision (ROD) are issued subsequent to resolution of all land use protests.

EPA recognizes the complexity and diversity of the proposed resource management actions and supports BLM's intention to move forward promptly to implement a new RMP plan based on emerging issues and changing circumstances. We expect that planning issues discussed in our comments will continue to be among those monitored as the plan is implemented. If you would like to discuss these comments, or any other issues related to our review of the Final RMP/EIS, please contact me at 303 312-6004 or Larry Kimmel at 303 312-6659.

Sincerely,

Larry Svoboda
Director, NEPA Program
Office of Ecosystems Protection and Remediation

Enclosure



EPA Remaining Concerns for Richfield Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement

- 1. EPA Comment 1:** We believe damage to soils, vegetation, cultural and paleontological resources, scenic quality, riparian, aquatic and/or other important resources should be more fully disclosed, and site-specific mitigation measures (i.e., signage, fencing and other barriers) be proposed in the FEIS to ensure these resources are restored and protected. Such disclosure and mitigation is particularly important for other heavily used areas proposed to remain open for off-highway vehicle (OHV) travel under Alternative B: 1) Big Rocks Trials Area (270 acres) which provides trials motorcycle/rock crawling recreational opportunities; 2) Glenwood Play Area (3,300 acres) to be managed as a community OHV area; 3) Aurora Play Area (310 acres) to be managed as a community OHV area; and 4) Mayfield Open Area (1,900 acres) to be managed as a community OHV play area.

BLM Response 1: The DRMP/DEIS Chapter 4 discloses OHV impacts to vegetation, cultural resources, paleontological resources, scenic quality, riparian, aquatic and other important resources. Site specific mitigation measures will be addressed at the activity level planning during implementation. The RFO conducted a botanical survey of the Mayfield White Hills Area early in 2008. Based upon this survey, the proposed alternative in the PRMP/FEIS would eliminate cross country OHV use for the protection of rare plants.

Requested Clarification: In light of previous mitigation measures having been relatively unsuccessful in addressing resource impacts due to OHV use, please provide examples of more effective measures to minimize or eliminate impacts that may be implemented for future site specific planning efforts.

- 2. EPA Comment 2:** The Draft RMP/EIS does not describe nor calculate the projected concentrations for any of the alternatives. We recommend that BLM disclose projected National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) and visibility pollutant concentrations in the Final EIS (FEIS).

BLM Response 2: BLM's draft air resources guidance states that quantitative dispersion modeling is inappropriate in the absence of detailed emission data, especially source location information. BLM would consider dispersion modeling for project-specific EIS associated with a proposed project.

Requested Clarification: We recommend rephrasing the above response and the FEIS page 4-5 that state "BLM would consider dispersion modeling for project-specific EIS associated with a proposed project." to a more definitive commitment to perform air dispersion modeling when a proposed project could negatively impact NAAQS or air quality related values.

3. **EPA Comment 7:** Parker Mountain Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC): this new ACEC would provide needed special management attention to protect and prevent irreparable damage to a number of important resource values including sagebrush steppe, sage grouse, Utah prairie dog, and Pygmy rabbits habitats in/around the 270 acre Big Rocks Trials Area.

BLM Response 7: The sagebrush-steppe habitat was one of the resources found to be relevant and important for the potential Parker Mountain ACEC.

Requested Clarification: The response does not directly address EPA's comment regarding the Parker Mountain ACEC. Please clarify criteria and decisions used in determining Parker Mountain qualifications to be designated an ACEC.

4. **EPA Comment 8:** Rainbow Hills ACEC: this new ACEC would provide needed special management attention to protect and prevent irreparable damage to a number of important resource values including mule deer habitat, natural systems and special status species (i.e., Utah phacelia, Arapien stickleaf, Wards penstemon, rainbow rabbitbrush, Sigurd townsendia, and Glenwood milkvetch) in/around the 3,300 acre Glenwood Play Area.

BLM Response 8: This area was considered in the range of alternatives and is available for the decision maker to consider in developing the Proposed RMP and ROD.

Requested Clarification: Similar to EPA Comment 7 above, the response does not directly address EPA's comment regarding the Rabbit Hills ACEC. Please clarify criteria and decisions used in determining Rabbit Hills qualifications to be designated an ACEC.

5. **EPA Comment 14:** In the open OHV travel area in/around Factory Butte where significant resource damage has occurred, we also commend the BLM for closing off areas to protect-threatened and endangered plant species including the Wright Fishhook and Winkler cacti. In order to provide long-term protection of these resources, we recommend that open OHV travel be limited to the area that includes most of the Mancos shale badlands in/around Swing Arm City by continuing to restrict OHV travel to designated routes.

BLM Response 14: The Factory Butte emergency closure order is independent of and outside the scope of this RMP planning process. Further, the BLM has no duty to obtain input from the public prior to issuing a restriction order under the 43 CFR. Threats to threatened and endangered species in the Factory Butte area were first identified as an issue in the 1982 Henry Mountains MFP. Protection of threatened and endangered species in the Factory Butte area has been a management issue ever since and has been carried forward as a management issue in the RMP process by BLM staff.

Requested Clarification: Thank you for the explanation for the emergency closure of Factory Butte. Please provide a specific response regarding EPA's recommendation regarding the area in/around Swing Arm City.

- 6. EPA Comment 16:** We also recommend that a portion of this area immediately adjacent to the Capitol Reef Country Scenic Byway on Utah Highway 24 be reclassified from Visual Resources Management (VRM) Class IV to III to help protect important visual resources for other users (e.g. scenic drivers and photographers).

BLM Response 16: The suggested management is contained within the range of alternatives for the decision maker to consider in developing the Proposed RMP and ROD.

Requested Clarification: Please provide a more detailed response to evaluation criteria and applicable policies applied to the Capitol Reef Country Scenic Byway in determining the appropriate VRM classification.